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REMARKS

ON
MR. WAKEFIELD'S ENQUIRY.

[PRICE EIGHTEEN-PENCE.]

R. H. M. A. R. K. S.

WAKFIELD ENQUIRY



[BRITISH MUSEUM - LONDON]

REMARKS
ON
Mr. WAKEFIELD'S ENQUIRY
INTO THE
EXPEDIENCY AND PROPRIETY
OF
PUBLIC OR SOCIAL WORSHIP.

BY GEORGE BURGESS, A. B.
CURATE OF WHITLESEY, IN THE ISLE OF ELY.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

Whoever thinks justly must be sensible, that Private Religion never did in fact subsist, but where some public profession of it was regularly kept up: he must be sensible, that, if Public Worship were once discontinued, an universal forgetfulness of that God would ensue, whom to remember is the strongest sense and preservative against vice.

WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

L O N D O N :

SOLD BY J. EVANS, PATER-NOSTER-ROW;
J. AND J. MERRIL, AND J. NICHOLSON, CAMBRIDGE;
AND J. JACOB, PETERBOROUGH.

M DCC XCII.

R E M A R K S

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BUTT OF MAN.



L O N D O N
SOLD BY J. BARNES, WATERLOO ROW;
J. AND J. MANNING, AND J. LICHFIELD, CAMBRIDGE;
AND J. JACOB, ST. PETERSBURG.
M DCCCXXXII

REMARKS, &c.

TH E following observations being principally confined to the *expediency*, and *utility* of public or social worship, it becomes less necessary to enter upon the argument, whether it be or be not authorized by Christ and his Apostles. I shall therefore content myself with remarking, once for all, that from the practice of our Saviour himself, the nature of his precepts, and the subsequent conduct of his Apostles, little of that positive condemnation which Mr. Wakefield so strenuously insists upon, can, by a fair, reasonable, and unprejudiced deduction be at all inferred (*a*).

(*a*) See Matt. xviii. 20. Luke i. 8, 9, 10. ix. 28. xi. 1, 2. xxiv. 53. John xi. 41, 42. xvii. Acts i. 14. 24. 25. ii. 42. iv. 24. vi. 6. xii. 5. 12. xx. 36. xxi. 4, 5, &c. &c.

In estimating the utility of public worship, it becomes a question of some importance to determine, how far the abuse of such an institution may be supposed to warrant its disuse. They who are of opinion that no abuse whatever should be permitted to have such an effect, carry the argument for establishments to an extent to which probably it will not reach, and to which it is indeed hardly a part of sound policy to wish it to reach. The general separation which took place from the Church of Rome at the beginning of the sixteenth century, had its first rise in those gross enormities which were so mixed and blended with the papistical rites and doctrines, as to contaminate the very sum and substance of their religion, and render it a mere system of hypocrisy and corruption.

They, on the other hand, who, with an unpardonable instability, are for changing and exchanging, if an institution be liable to be abused but in the slightest degree, may justly, I think, be suspected of dispositions more prone to innovation than reform. "If every right practice were to be discontinued, because it had been
 " found

“ found not to be successful in every in-
 “ stance; this false reasoning, pushed to
 “ the extreme, might at last be brought as
 “ an argument for shutting up our churches
 “ and burning our bibles (b).” Prudence
 will naturally direct towards the point of
 moderation, and will not suffer us, in order
 to rectify a possible error, to intrench upon
 a probable danger. A tree of the soundest
 growth may nourish corrupt branches, and
 those corrupt branches, by long indulgence,
 may, in process of time, injure the trunk
 itself; but where is the wisdom of laying
 the ax to the root, when an application of
 the pruning knife would alone be sufficient?
 Every reasonable and real grievance, it is
 no doubt the desire, as well as duty, of a
 good and careful legislator to remedy im-
 mediately, but surely if it be impolitic not
 to innovate where there is occasion, it is
 equally impolitic to innovate where there
 is no occasion.

Adverting to the state of public or social
 worship, and particularly to the worship

(b) Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of
 the Great to general Society, p. 76.

which

which obtains among ourselves, no one, I believe, will be eager to affirm, that it is free from all impurities, and cannot be defiled—impurities it must have—defiled it must be—still however as an institution that, upon the whole, is productive of general benefit (and no institution, I presume, be it of what origin it will, can be otherwise productive) it is entitled to our approbation, and deserves our encouragement.

Doubtless it would be a desirable accomplishment to see those things which offend done away, and the public service of the Almighty shine forth *in the brightness of its glory*; but because this neither is, nor perhaps is likely to be the case, we are not, upon the bare conjecture that we may thereby amend the morals of mankind and *do God service*, to demolish with an unchristian violence, the venerable structure and all its appendages at a blow; that structure which probably was originally reared by the hand of the Almighty himself, and which the virtue and wisdom of ages has agreed in sanctifying and supporting.

Social worship, inadequate as it may be to a complete efficiency of the purposes it
was

was designed for, is yet replete with such manifest advantages, as could never fairly and duly be compensated, were it once abolished. That the religion of the *fashionable* world would not thereby be materially injured, I can easily conceive; for the piety of the people of this description is subject to such sudden and unaccountable variations, and is influenced by such trivial and ridiculous circumstances, as to make it hard to determine what their religion is, or whether, in truth, they have any religion at all; but upon the sober, and serious, and more decent part of mankind, who have hitherto considered the public worship of their Maker as both a reasonable, and a requisite service, an alteration of this nature, operating to the degradation and subversion of an opinion so rational and becoming, would operate with the worst effect.

Take away the public service of the Church, and you destroy the poor man's religion at once—you dry up the only source of information to which the ignorant and uninformed can at all times have recourse—in fact, you shut the door of devotion (and by so doing, who can say how far you may
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obscure and entangle the entrance to salvation) against nine parts out of ten of your fellow-creatures! It is in vain that you attempt any substitution in place of this public instruction—all substitutions will be disregarded, and will be deemed totally unequivalent to the solid and long experienced advantages you deprive them of. Besides, is it quite certain that there will be such an additional, such a superabundant diligence in all pastors and others “ in “ expounding the wonders of the divine law “ to their poor and unlearned brethren (c),” and in *preaching the word*, and in being *instant in season, out of season* (d), as may possibly be found needful where the instructions are not public, but solitary, and domestic, and confined to a few? And is it not more likely that these private admonitions will cut out infinitely more employment for them than, with all their becoming zeal to *do the work of an evangelist*, and to *make full proof of their ministry* (e), they are able

(c) Wakefield's Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of public or social Worship, p. 40.

(d) 2 Tim. iv. 2

(e) 2 Tim. iv. 5.

to perform? Surely the project was not the offspring of reflection to recommend the abolition of public worship, the very thing which alone impresses, and preserves a sense of religion upon the minds of the multitude, as a mean of making the multitude better!

A devotion abstracted from the common forms of worship, would, if it were possible universally to introduce it, be undoubtedly preferable to that mixed kind of piety which obtains among us at present; but so long as human nature continues as it is, the religion of the mind will never be the religion of the world. Words, with the great mass of mankind, are but slowly formed into any thing like rational ideas, and more slowly still are those ideas productive of a correspondent practice—it requires a mind more enlarged than minds are in general, to surmount the incumbrance of intermediate steps, and arrive at once to the height of first principles; “for while we are beings
 “compounded of passion, as well as intel-
 “lect, the devotion of the generality is
 “not so purely spiritual as not to stand in
 “need of every external and collateral
 “help,

" help (f), and numbers of the human race must be content to receive instruction through sensible mediums, till some mode be devised, a discovery hitherto denied even to the penetrating spirit of the present age, of equalizing understandings amid every variation of constitution, education, and opportunity.

We may therefore, I think, safely acquiesce in the conclusion, that a mere spiritual devotion is not calculated to remedy, in any material degree, the loss which would be sustained by discarding the public service of the Church. Such an inclination of the affections as would lead men to the immediate knowledge of their duty towards God, and towards one another, may be an object of human desire, but not of human expectation—in a world where the means of existence are oftentimes so extremely precarious, and where the far greater part of us are incessantly employed in furnishing one for another the common conveniencies of life, it can hardly be supposed that any

(f) Manners of the Great, p. 81.

considerable number should possess the eagle eye of philosophy ; it is perhaps as much as will be required of us, if we convert to as good a use as we are able, those plain abilities which it has pleased the Almighty to bestow upon us, and if the single talent be sufficient to form an upright heart, why covet the ten talents which, if they do not make us better will not make us wiser.

The spirit of intellectual religion, assimilating only with those angelic minds which are in perfect unison with the eternal principles of virtue, can rarely be impressed, with any visible effect, on beings that are *by nature born in sin*, and nurtured, as it were, *in the pomps and vanities of a wicked world*. The man of business, the man of pleasure, and the man of ambition, are none of them in a condition to be much benefited by the exercise of spiritual devotion ; their religion, it is to be feared, seldom goes beyond a sober and decent attention to the *ceremonial* parts of worship ; and as for the great mass of mankind, the poor and illiterate of all descriptions, that share of piety they possess is intimately connected with the *precise words*, nay possibly

sibly with the very *form and mode* which append to the public service; and those words, and that form once obliterated, we know not what alteration it may produce in their minds. “ A poor man’s religion (it “ has been justly observed) is very closely “ connected with the particular expressions “ in which it was conveyed to him: he “ frequently has not considered their real “ force: the effect they produced on his “ mind at first, proceeded principally from “ his very natural sympathy with his parents “ and instructors, and the same expressions “ now excite in him similar feelings, almost “ as much perhaps from habit as from rea- “ son. Deprive him of the accustomed “ *sounds*, and you impair the religious “ effect of the *sentiment* (g).” Nor can it be matter of surprize, that an association, seemingly so incongruous, should take place, when we consider how small are the advantages possessed by the multitude, and how little they are accustomed to distinguish, and to reflect upon those crude ideas

(g) Reasons for revising by authority our present version of the Bible.

which they every now and then imbibe. The wonder, I think, in this case is, not that they should annex manner with matter, form with substance, but that out of this heterogeneous mass, they should be able to pick up any mental nourishment at all. That the poor however are benefited, and consequently society itself, by the present mode of public worship, imperfect as that mode may in several respects be, is clearly evident from hence, that in every place, go where you will, the most sober and regular of that description will invariably be found among those who are most constant in their attendance upon divine service (*h*). How it may be with the higher classes of the community, I pretend not to determine; but it requires, I think, a most unlimited faith to believe, that the causes

(*h*) I am far from inferring that all those who neglect a strict observation of Sunday are remiss in the performance of their other duties; but I will venture to affirm, that all whom I have remarked conscientiously to observe this day from right motives, have been uniformly attentive to their general conduct.—*Manners of the Great*, p. 55.

of their profligacy may be discovered in the improprieties of our worship.

The language of ridicule is not always the language of reason. Mr. Wakefield might have spared many a ludicrous remark in the course of his Enquiry, without at all injuring the popularity of his pamphlet. We are not yet in so great danger of being *righteous overmuch*, as to stand in need of those coruscations of jocularity to enlighten our benighted souls, and bring us back again to the quietude of a monastic torpidness. This gentleman, in the strong conviction of the propriety of extirpating public worship, which he looks upon as “ a part of that *hay and stubble* which has “ been laid on the *foundation* of Christi- “ anity by officious zealots, to be destroyed “ by *fire* (i),” has taken a liberty which is but little accordant with that *sound speech that cannot be condemned* (j), or with that charity in our judgments one of another, which the Scriptures so frequently and so strongly, both directly and indirectly en-

(i) Enquiry, p. 14.

(j) Titus, 11. 8.

force. By a most unaccountable perversion of that spirit of mild, genuine benevolence, which so forcibly recommending, and so ardently admiring, it certainly would be inexcusable not to suppose him possessed of, he has involved together, in one undistinguishing censure, the votaries of social worship and the votaries of hypocrisy!

Every man shall bear his own burden (k) —if the united devotions of a congregation be a fault, the consequences thereof appertain to themselves—they do not take upon them to decide on the sincerity of you, the spiritual worshippers of the great Lord of all, why therefore should you hold it a part of your duty to pass sentence upon theirs? It is carrying the exploded notion of infallibility too far, when man thus affects to sit in judgment upon the conduct of his fellow creatures. We should be very cautious in presuming to condemn those invisible affections of the mind during the time of divine service, which, notwithstanding any little particularities in the external behaviour, may,

(k) Gal. vi. 5.

for ought we know, be altogether consonant with the place and the occasion.

The human heart was never yet detected by human means; it is involved in those nice and complicated shades, between which we in vain endeavour to trace the line of distinction—upon the usual tenor of his words and his deeds, we may in some measure form our estimate of a fellow-creature's sincerity; but, by a peculiarity of circumstances, by no means uncommon in this transitory state of affairs, even words and deeds may, now and then, but faintly or erroneously represent the real state of the mind. An argument this against the rash and too premature condemnation of a conduct, which, as the offspring of frail mortality, we are altogether incompetent to investigate and decide upon.

And in this opinion of the hypocrisy of our public worship, Mr. Wakefield seems settled and confirmed, by his observation on the behaviour of those who attend it. “ The fact (says he) is, you see nothing at
“ such places, with a few exceptions, but
“ lolling, and gaping, and stretching, and
“ sleeping, and every additional symptom
“ of

“ of weariness, independent of bowings,
 “ and greetings, and salutations, even
 “ among otherwise respectable and vir-
 “ tuous people: a clear demonstration, in
 “ my mind, that such an usage is by no
 “ means calculated for, at least, the gene-
 “ rality of mankind (l).” Now allowing
 the above statement of the case to be, what
 it hardly by-the-bye is, a fair and impartial
 one, the conclusion which Mr. W. draws
 from it does still by no means follow.
 “ ’Tis vain to seek in men for more
 “ than man (m).” That those symptoms
 of uneasiness he alludes to, now and
 then do shew themselves, we are ready
 to grant; neither do we deny, or by vain
 excuses wish to palliate, the unbecom-
 ing practice, a practice born of a foolish
 parent fashion, and nurtured by a stub-
 born tyrant custom, of greetings and salu-
 tations, in the very presence of the Al-
 mighty; but that *therefore* mankind in
 general is not edified by such an usage,

(l) Enquiry, p. 32.

(m) Young's Night Thoughts.

and that those spots in our devotional exercises, do entirely discredit and ruin the good effects which might otherwise result from them, we can in no wise believe. The deformities of social worship bear no reasonable proportion to its use and beauty, and even those abuses it is liable to, originate more from the temper and laxity of the times, than from any essential defect either in its manner or its matter. Philosophy may imagine faults which reason cannot find, as children see by night the goblins they in vain look for in the day; but, laying aside the fervor of prejudice, there certainly is no adequate motive for taxing with so much severity, a service in itself so rational.

The principles of public worship are calculated to produce public good, and it is hardly a fair objection to them to assert, that they operate in no perceptible manner upon the behaviour of a congregation. The spark of piety thereby kindled in the breast, may so far be of an evanescent nature, as at one time to burn with more, and at another with less effulgence; but burn as it will, it at least hinders the heart from

from becoming thoroughly insensible; it at least has an effect on the mind yet to be formed, however little it may tend to enliven the reprobate spirit of the cool, and determined sinner.

Surely something is gained by an attendance upon divine service, if not altogether *turning away the wicked man from his wickedness* and making him better, it yet so far has an influence over him as to keep him stationary in vice (n), and hinder him from indulging in those excesses, which, without such a seasonable restraint, the depravity of his passions might hurry him into. This effect, I believe, it will be allowed to have even upon the most listless and indifferent, while upon those who come with prepared hearts to *worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*, the impression made by the public service of our church, seriously and with

(n) That there are many luke-warm, and even some depraved spirits among the votaries of public worship, we readily acknowledge; but we must be suffered to ask in return, whether, by entirely absenting themselves from the House of God, they would not become, in the course of a very little time, ten-fold more the children of iniquity than they are?

decency performed, is both lasting and valuable.

I do not think it in the power of man to conceive a situation more compleatly deplorable, than must be the situation of the mass of society, were Mr. Wakefield's illusive notions respecting the utility of public worship, to operate, by the aid of any unaccountable infatuation, to its final suppression—this would be no less than actually demolishing, by emancipating the multitude from a pious and rational custom which they have hitherto deemed sacred, the only barrier we have left between virtue and depravity (o); for, so far as the social duties can be said to be preserved among us, they owe that preservation chiefly to the mediation of public worship; and as for the divine duties, the neglect of which not so intimately affecting our present interests, we are therefore less

(o) It has been the opinion of many wise and good men, that Christianity will stand, or fall, as this day is neglected, or observed. Sunday seems to be a kind of Christian palladium, and the City of God will never be totally taken by the enemy, till the observance of that be quite lost.—*Manners of the Great*, p. 55.

careful in scrupulously fulfilling; it is a doubt whether even the mere shadow of them would be left us, were we not reminded, one day in the week, of their actual existence. "In truth, to the keeping up the religion (i. e. the public worship) of this day, we owe in a great measure that the very face of Christianity hath hitherto been preserved among us. And were it not for this, for any thing I know, *most of us in a very few years would become little better than heathens and barbarians* (p)."

But it may well be questioned whether this expedient of Mr. Wakefield's for the increase of piety and virtue, (allowing, for a moment, that such might possibly be its effect) could ever be carried into execution with that degree of safety and harmony, which would be necessary to ensure its success. I must here advert to the danger of innovation, "that miserable excuse," as it has been somewhat ungraciously

(p) Archbishop Sharp's Sermons.

termed (*q*), " for supineness and inattention to matters of great concernment." Innovations are, at the best, but doubtful experiments; frequently they are destructive ones; and although in circumstances of extreme emergency, they may ultimately be productive of beneficial consequences, they yet but too often leave behind them those violent, and prejudicial impressions, which become the foundation of future animosities. When once the rage for reformation is let loose, it tears up like a hurricane every thing before it; and passion usurping the place of reason, the evil and the good, in this chaotic confusion, promiscuously blended together are promiscuously swept away. We cannot so nicely infuse a sense of moderate principles in the minds of the multitude, as we can digest and meliorate it in our own; they will always be more swayed by present circumstances than future expectations; and therefore be the motive for a reform never

(*q*) Considerations on the Expediency of revising the Liturgy and Articles of the Church of England, p. 4.

so rational, it may, in its consequences, as the execution thereof must devolve, in some measure, upon the collective body, be distorted into anarchy and mischief (r).

Abolish social worship and the whole train of sabbatical rites, and you shall presently perceive the nature of those advantages you may look speedily to reap from it. The inferior classes of the community, neglecting all notions of a mere spiritual worship, will then freely indulge in those excesses, from which they are at present, to a considerable degree, restrained, either by their own veneration for the Sabbath, or by the exemplary veneration of their neighbours. Depravity is by no means an

(r) Mr. Christie, in his *Miscellanies Philosophical, &c.* has started not probably the only, but certainly one of the most forcible and rational objections against the present temper of the times that I have yet met with—"A general spirit of *reform*, says he, now pervades us, and an inclination to enlarge in every shape the powers and privileges of the PEOPLE. But, perhaps it may be found that we are beginning at the wrong end of things; and that, before we make the people more powerful, we should endeavour to make them better qualified for it; lest, by giving them POWER, before they have got WISDOM, we make them more unhappy and more vicious than before."

exotic

exotic of the human heart, and every step that is taken to increase this depravity, will be made with more facility, in proportion to the laxity of that tie which has hitherto operated as a wholesome incumbrance. As it is, and with the good instructions they have, we do not see that men are all that they ought to be; but these instructions withdrawn, and the salutary and usual observance of the Lord's day suppressed, what is it that can possibly hinder a total degeneracy of manners from immediately taking place? Indeed we cannot "away with" these wretched remains of barbarity and "*judaism*"—these "*beggarly elements* from the "profession of true *Christians* (s);" but must continue to keep holy the Sabbath day, and offer up, in the spirit of resignation, our joint prayers and praises to the Almighty, "walking in the night of infant superstition, or (if you will) in the malignant twilight of immature and unreformed "*Christianity* (s)," till we become acquainted with a better substitute for this *yoke of bond-*

age, than a mere mental devotion is fitted for affording us.

Secret and retired prayer, more or less, is without dispute the duty of every Christian, but I cannot persuade myself that it will answer all the purposes of human wants and infirmities; for although the petition put up in the closet be as acceptable to the Almighty as the prayer offered in the midst of a congregation—although a man, when he walks out into his fields, may address himself as fervently to his Maker, and with as much sincerity, as his neighbour does at church, yet, is it a decided point that he *will* do so? And is it not the more likely conjecture of the two, that in such a situation, his mind will be rather intent on his *flocks and his herds* and the good things which surround him, than on Him who is “the author and “giver of *those* good things?” But even allowing that private prayer is duly attended to by those who absent themselves from the public service, still, when we consider the *general consequences* of such a behaviour, and to what evil purposes an example of this kind may be distorted by the vicious or
the

the weak, we cannot, I think, conscientiously acquit ourselves of, at least, being accessory to improper and profane conduct in others, however free from such conduct we may be in ourselves. The same Apostle who commanded us to *prove all things and hold fast that which is good*, commanded us also to *abstain from all appearance of evil*, and it is no proof of our wisdom or of our charity to *put an occasion to fall in our brother's way*, when, with so little hurt to the most scrupulous conscience, we might avoid it. "You stay from church to employ the Sabbath at home in exercises and studies suited to its proper business: your next neighbour stays from church to spend the seventh day less religiously than he passed any of the six, in a sleepy, stupid rest, or at some rendezvous of drunkenness and debauchery, and yet thinks that he is only imitating you, because you both agree in not going to church (t)." *Let not then your good be evil spoken of (u), but*

(t) Paley's Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, vol. ii. chap. 4.

(u) Rom. xiv. 16.

considering that *we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves—let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification (v), and, if possible, be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (w).*

I allow to retired prayer every favor that its warmest advocate can demand—it is the sincere and genuine exertion of the mind—it is devotion unadorned and in its greatest purity (x)—but, for the sake and safety of millions of the human race, it must not be permitted to supersede social worship; a worship so well calculated to suggest and disseminate just notions, and to wipe off, in some measure, that rust of iniquity which would otherwise cleave to and corrode the heart. Without, therefore, venturing any decision upon the merits of these separate modes of petitioning, I have only to observe in favor of public worship, that being more

(v) Rom. xv. 1, 2.

(w) 1 Cor. 1. 10.

(x) That intercourse between God and the Soul which is quite concealed from the sight and knowledge of others, is often the sincerest and the truest act of reverence and faith which we pay to him. Jortins Sermons.

extensively beneficial, and, if performed with a proper degree of faith and fervour, equally efficacious, it thereby, upon the ground at least of expediency, is entitled to that approbation which at all times, and in all places, it has uniformly received, and maintained (y).

As to the severe remarks so liberally interspersed upon the manner in which our public service is celebrated—the ceremonies with which it is encumbered—the tediousness and tautology of the prayers in general

(y) As no one seems more candidly to have discriminated the respective advantages of social and retired prayer than that pious and able Divine Dr. Jer. Taylor, I will here subjoin his sentiments upon this subject as I find them expressed (Part 11 Sect 12) in his Great Exemplar. "Prayer, says he, is *public* or *private*; in the communion or society of saints, or in our closets; these prayers have less temptation to vanity, the other have more advantages of charity, example, fervour, and energy. In public offices we avoid singularity, in the private we avoid hypocrisy: those are of more edification, these of greater retiredness and silence of spirit: those serve the needs of all the world in the first intention, and our own by consequence; these serve our own needs first, and the public only by a secondary intention: these have more pleasure, they more duty: these are the best instruments of repentance, where our confessions may be more particular, and our shame less scandalous; the other the better for eucharist and instruction, for edification of the Church, and glorification of God."

—and

—and the presumption and impropriety of particular requests — these, the futility of which tho' not so immediately coming within the bounds of a mere delineation of the expediency of social worship to point out, it may yet be necessary, seeing Mr. Wakefield's opinion thereupon is calculated to mislead the unwary, and to weaken the respect of every plain and pious christian for the devotion of his ancestors, with as much briefness as possible to advert to; leaving it to the defenders of that liturgy which “is in every part as antient and primitive, as it is pious and unblameable” (2), to answer more at large, and to refute *in meekness of wisdom*, all such charges, which certainly have not their rise in the clear fountains of truth, but rather come to us corrupted, and defiled thro' the dark channels of prejudice.

Hooker in his Ecclesiastical Polity (a),

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(2) Bishop Taylor's Preface to his collection of Forms of Prayer.

(a) In disputes of this, and indeed of every other nature, we cannot, I am of opinion, more effectually serve the cause we espouse, than by referring to sound and unexceptionable authorities; and tho' it may require no

re-

a work that contains “ a defence of the
 “ constitution of the Church of England in
 “ all its parts, which its worst enemies have
 “ never answered and never can”, (b) has
 abundantly demonstrated the reasonableness,
 and efficacy of those ceremonies, which our
 church in her reformed state, has thought it
 not unbecoming to retain and adopt. Nor
 have other learned men been altogether
 silent upon this head. “ Some ceremo-
 “ nies (says Dr. Bisse in his beauty of holi-
 “ ness) are necessary to the nature of public
 “ worship, some conducive to its beauty,
 “ some to edification. Such are those
 “ which our church hath retained, being
 “ studious in her choice, as she declares,
 ‘ not so much how to please either party, as
 ‘ how to please God, and profit them both.’
 “ Had she, in compliance with the Papists,

remarkable exertion to bring forward a very formidable
 list of them, yet, if our adversary be unable to *gain say*, or
resist this, or any part of this list, we have then accom-
 plished, what ought to be a primary object with all defen-
 ders and oppugners of what denomination soever, a firmer
 establishment of the truth.

(b) Apology for the Liturgy, &c. of the Church of
 England.

“ retained all, she must have displeased thro’
 “ her pageantry : had she, in compliance
 “ with the sectarists, abolished all, she must
 “ have no less displeased thro’ her deformity.
 “ Wherefore it was and hath been her wis-
 “ dom from the days of her first establish-
 “ ment to keep the mean between the two
 “ extremes, rather inclining to a decent
 “ variety, than affecting too sordid a sim-
 “ plicity ; remembering, that when the
 “ *daughter of Sion was brought to the king, her*
 “ *raiment was of needle work wrought about with*
 “ *divers colours : and the king had great delight*
 “ *in her beauty*”. And further, “ as there is
 “ no impropriety in the fitness of the mat-
 “ ter, nor in the justness of the language, so
 “ neither is there any in the *manner* of our
 “ worship ; which appears chiefly in the
 “ *decency of the ceremonies* and gestures pre-
 “ scribed in our liturgy. Our church, in
 “ no part of her service, *behaveth herself un-*
 “ *seemly*. The postures she useth, whether
 “ in prayers or praises, carry in them a
 “ significancy and decency : they bespeak
 “ and become the action she is about” (c).

And Dr. Ogden upon the same subject, expresses himself nearly in the same manner. " Our church, says he, in her public service, " is neither destitute of grace and dignity, " *nor yet laboriously or fancifully ceremonious;* " neither supinely negligent, nor vainly " ostentatious. She recommends to her " sons and desires to instill into them such " a reverence for religion as may be united " with the love of it, a sound piety untainted " by hypocrisy or enthusiasm" (d).

With respect to the *tediousness*, and *tautology* of our public worship, it may be observed in the words of the venerable Hooker, that " the reasons why our common prayer in- " clines to *length* in the whole service, rather " than brevity, is to shew the gravity, " weight, and importance of such services, " that no man might be tempted to think " that the duty was of no great esteem or " consideration, because it was soon at an " end. Another advantage it hath, that " they whose multiplicity of affairs or law-

(d) Sermons on the Ten Commandments—Sermon 2.

“ful impediments will not admit their
 “coming *early* to prayers, yet through the
 “length of the service they may have an
 “opportunity to participate of some reason-
 “able part, and joining with the congrega-
 “tion, share in the *blessings* of the whole” (e).

“The length, says Paley, and repetitions
 “complained of in our Liturgy, are not so
 “much the fault of the compilers as the
 “effect of uniting into *one* service what was
 “originally, but with very little regard to
 “the conveniency of the people, distributed
 “into three” (f)

I cannot however but coincide with Mr. Wakefield in his censure of the manner in which the Lord's Prayer is, I doubt, but too generally recited among us—Such a prayer, delivered to us by such a person, we ought doubtless to have “always in our hearts”; but whether the so frequent repetition of it (it occurring no less than four, and sometimes six times in the course of the same service)

(e) Ecclesiastical Polity, Book v.

(f) Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,
 Vol. 11. Chap. 5.

takes not, in some measure, from its due, and natural solemnity, and is a mean of its being hurried over in the precipitate manner alluded to, may well enough admit of a suspicion. Possessed of a peculiar degree of excellence, it will of course, always carry with it a peculiar degree of authority; but possibly that authority would not at all be diminished, nor that reverence in which it is universally had, at all be impaired, by a somewhat more sparing use of it in our daily public devotions.

Against the impropriety of particular requests, I confess I see no objection that can reasonably be urged. “ The language (says “ Mr. Wakefield) of true evangelical refig- “ nation should ever be modelled by the “ standard of our Saviour’s own words, with “ respect to all the future events of life; “ *nevertheless, O! Father! not my will, but “ thine be done!* Whereas modern suppli- “ cants enter upon a long enumeration of “ all their wants with the utmost familiarity, “ and implore favors utterly inconsistent “ with that state of *trial* in which men are “ placed: as if the supreme being were not “ acquainted with the proper means of our “ real

" real happiness, or knew not our wants,
 " before we utter them' (g).

Again—" Where is the passage of Scrip-
 " ture, which gives me authority to pray
 " for *health*, (to single out this instance from
 " among others) in that unqualified man-
 " ner, with which such petitions are *often*
 " urged on the ear of the Almighty? Sick-
 " ness, for any thing that I can foresee, may
 " prove ultimately the greatest of blessings,
 " by exercising and refining the most im-
 " portant affections of the heart; and *health*
 " may not improbably issue in the ruin of
 " my happiness" (g).

Now as a proof that the language of our
 Liturgy is no other than " the language of
 " true evangelical resignation," and that we
 do by no means offer up our petitions in
 that " unqualified manner" with which Mr.
 W. taxes us, I venture, amid a great num-
 ber, to bring forward the following examples.

— Finally, we commend to thy fatherly
 " goodness, all those who are any ways
 " afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or

estate; that it may please thee, to comfort
 ' and relieve them according to their several
 ' necessities.' Collect for all conditions of
 men—' Almighty God, the fountain of all
 ' wisdom, who knowest our necessities be-
 ' fore we ask, and our ignorance in asking;
 ' we beseech thee to have compassion upon
 ' our infirmities; and those things which for
 ' our unworthiness we dare not, and for our
 ' blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us,
 ' for the worthiness of thy Son Jesus Christ our
 ' Lord. Amen.' Collect after the Offer-
 tory.—' And grant that those things which
 ' we have faithfully asked, according to thy
 ' will, may effectually be obtained, &c.' Ib.
 —' That if it shall be thy good pleasure to restore
 ' him to his former health, &c.' Visitation
 of the Sick.—' That it may please thee to pre-
 ' serve all that travel by land or by water,
 ' all women labouring of child, all sick
 ' persons, and young children, and to shew
 ' thy pity upon all prisoners and captives;
 Litany (h)—Nobler instances of meek, and
 respectful

(h) The enumeration of human wants and sufferings in
 the Litany is almost complete. A Christian petitioner
 can

respectful submission to the will of an Almighty Creator, and of "true evangelical" resignation" intimately harmonizing with that celebrated standard for a Christian's devotion, *nevertheless, O father! not my will, but thine be done!* I verily believe can nowhere be found.

Universally, when we pray for particular favors by name, we not only do it in subserviency to the will of our Maker, but likewise from, what at least appears to us, a reasonable and proper motive: thus, in a course of continued dry weather, we pray for rain; because, in our frail opinion, such an event, by inducing a greater plenty, would become a source of general happiness. Again, when oppressed with *sickness*, we likewise pray for *health*; because naturally we desire freedom from pain, whether what we desire be best for us or not: but in all cases, whether our supplications be

can have few things to ask of God, or to deprecate, which he will not find there expressed, and *for the most part with inimitable tenderness and simplicity.*

Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy,
Vol. II. Chap. 5.

general,

general, or whether they be particular. our excellent Liturgy has, I think, abundantly guarded against any improper requests that might chance to be made, as in many other places, so in the judicious prayer of St. Chrysostom which concludes the first service; 'fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants, *as may be most expedient for them*;' thus leaving what may be most *acceptable to them* out of the question (1).

But it is not, I am persuaded, to any impropriety in our forms and ceremonies, or to any inconsistencies either in the public worship itself, or in the manner of its usual

(1) The reader who wishes for further information hereupon, may consult Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, especially the Fifth Book — Taylor's Great Exemplar, part ii. sect. 12. — Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, vol. ii. ch. 3. 5 — Ogden's Sermons on the Ten Commandments, Sermon. 2 — Nourse's Practical Discourses, Disc. 1 — Clarke's Exposition of the Church Catechism, part iv. p. 208 — Archbishop Hort's Sermons, Sermon. 6. — &c. &c. where he will see these subjects so ably, and judiciously illustrated, and defended, that he will only be surprized to find any one so hardy as to attempt, and so languine as to expect the subversion, and extirpation of what has been thus uniformly, and generally approved of, and adopted.

cele-

celebration, that we are to impute those overflowings of ungodliness, and that extreme indifference in offering the sacrifice of righteousness, which so shamefully characterize the conduct of the present age. Forms and ceremonies, if they tend to preserve order and decency, are not very likely to become a rock of offence to the sober, and rational part of mankind; nor can that service which warms and invigorates, or that minister who exercises his spiritual functions in a serious, and becoming manner, be liable to any other censure than that rash and unqualified one, which makes no distinction between the evil and the good. If truth be our aim, we must refer the perversion of our religious, and indeed of every other principle, to a source from which probably we should not guess it to be derived, viz. the refinement of our manners — This deceitful virtue has done us more harm than the best, and purest religion will ever do us good — The Manners of the Great, by no very imperceptible association, are become a standard to the manners of the age; the indifference and impiety of the gay and thoughtless, spread a baneful influence over every class of

of

of the community; and the simple, but amiable heart of the poor man, is ensnared and corrupted by the joyless, childish depravities of the rich. Refinement seems to have done that for us, which reason may in vain attempt to undo—it has adulterated every noble feeling, which the Almighty, when he *created man in his own image*, was pleased to endow him with—the duties of social life, those duties which cement us one to another, and without which, property would be precarious and existence a burden, it has so modified and condensed, that even the very libertine may set up for a teacher of morality (*k*); while the meek spirit of devotion itself, which one should suppose *the fool only who hath said in his heart, there is no God*, could think of making a mock at; it has coolly put down in the list of *possible* virtues, or traduced as the offspring of sanctified hypocrisy!

(*k*) It is, perhaps, one of the most alarming symptoms of the degeneracy of morals in the present day, that the distinctions of right and wrong are almost swept away in polite conversation. The most serious offences are often named with cool indifference; the most shameful profligacy with affected tenderness and indulgent toleration.

Manners of the Great, p. 65.

Man.

Mankind in proportion as they are less removed from the plain manners of sense and nature, are, I think, more prone to be guided, in the general tenor of their conduct, by the dictates of reason.—Refinement with us has long ago risen to its apex of utility: when it gave a kind and genial polish to the homely expressions of honesty, its tendency was so far agreeable, and so far it was worthy of adoption; but when, deserting the sacred cause of truth, it bestowed a false lustre on the snare of the sycophant, and administered to the designs of knavery and artifice, it lost that hold upon the mind it might otherwise have retained, and became an abomination. In fact, the manners of the present day cannot boast of any abundant superiority over those of the generations which are past and gone. Where the reasonable soul is degraded to the state of a mere automaton, and the man is in danger of being overlooked amid the fashion and finery of his habiliments—where the lip cannot be opened but to pour forth a nauseous torrent of unmeaning professions, and where the right hand of fellowship

lowship is mutually and unhesitatingly interchanged between

Men, that would blush at being *thought* sincere,

And feign, for glory, the few faults they want (l),

Something must needs be suspected amiss in the prevailing mode of education.

Inchanting novelty, that moon at full,

That finds out every crevice of the head

That is not found and perfect (m),

seems to be the only Divinity to which with heart and soul, a willing worship is paid; and so closely does one folly tread upon the heel of another, that a man's whole time is actually taken up in observing and catching to a nicety, the moments of this motley succession.

In adverting to the state of our ancestors a few years back, we shall find that, in

(l) Night Thoughts.

(m) Cowper's Talk.

point of *patient perseverance*, they went far beyond us both in their public and private devotions; but this we shall cease to wonder at, when we consider that *the words of truth and soberness* were, with them, uncontaminated by those glossy beauties of language which have since contrived to convert the shadow into the substance and the substance into the shadow. They had not yet learnt the prevaricating art of refinement—they had not yet been initiated in the mysteries of simulation, nor had they been taught to burlesque, with any tolerable grace, that sacred fountain from which they had so often drank of *the waters of comfort*—the name of God and religion conveyed to the mind, in their untutored estimation, an idea of seriousness, and the regular return of the sabbatical rites, tending to the increase of their piety, tended likewise to the increase of their happiness. Unfurnished with our luxuries, they were untainted by our vices—and any endeavour to blend together the contradictory shades of light and darkness, so as to make them perfectly coalesce upon the great picture of life, they, not holding to be within the scope of human

ingenuity, treated as chimerical—the fashion of the day had not then intrenched so far upon honesty and common sense, as to proclaim that a meritorious action in the eye of honour, which in the eye of reason was a rash and unprincipled one.

To advert however to our subject—I do not, I confess, see the abolition of public worship in the favorable light it has been depicted—on the contrary, I believe, notwithstanding the severe retort the expression has given rise to (*n*), that “ the bulk of the
 “ people submit, with much complacency,
 “ to the religion of the state; and where
 “ no undue arts are employed to perplex
 “ their understandings, do not usually
 “ trouble themselves or their neighbours
 “ with theological niceties” (*o*). If, for want of requisite abilities or opportunity, men are incapable of judging for themselves, they do well to accord with the established sentiments of the times; and if the public service of the Almighty has been

(*n*) Monthly Review, 1790, vol. ii. p. 345.

(*o*) An Apology for the Liturgy and Clergy of the Church of England, p. 9.

espoused and uniformly practised by the serious and good of their own and former generations; it becomes, I think, a duty in them, though they may not altogether comprehend or approve of every thing thereto belonging, to acquiesce in the general opinion, and worship after the general fashion.

Upon the whole, we are not, and we may thank God for it, a community of philosophers; *knowing but in part, we prophesy but in part*, consoling ourselves with the assurance, that *when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away* (p). We therefore patiently persevere in "the medley of vain babblings, and noisy show, and frantic gestures, and solemn vilages (q)," (convinced that these "formalities and fopperies" will then only be "swept into oblivion (r)," when man becomes freed from the clog of mortality) till by more cogent reasons than have hitherto been advanced, and more *meekness* in *instructing those that oppose themselves* (s)

(p) 1 Cor. xiii. 19.

(r) Ib. p. 18.

(q) Enquiry, p. 13.

(s) 2 Tim. ii. 25.

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(p) 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

(r) Ib. p. 18.

(q) Enquiry, p. 13.

(s) 2 Tim. ii. 25.

than

than has hitherto been exhibited, we are made sensible, that the Almighty may be worshipped by the myriads of his creatures, without UNION, without FORM, without ACTION, and without UTTERANCE.

I conclude in the words of a celebrated ecclesiastical character of our own church.

“ You are as free as we are; we affect no
 “ dominion over your faith--go and wor-
 “ ship the Creator and the Conservator of
 “ the Universe *in your own way*--but suffer
 “ us also to worship God *in our way*; let
 “ neither of us find fault with the other,
 “ but preserving good will, practising cour-
 “ tesy, interchanging good offices, let us
 “ all be persuaded that at the last day our
 “ different services will be accepted by him
 “ whom God hath appointed judge of all,
 “ with equal regard to the rectitude of our
 “ several intentions, and to the means we
 “ have used in acquiring information con-
 “ cerning the truth.” (t).

(t) A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Landaff, June 1791. p. 17.

T H E E N D.

A P P E N D I X.

CONTAINING

TESTIMONIES in Favor of PUBLIC WORSHIP.

THIS duty (viz. of Public Prayer) concerns us both as men, and members of that visible mystical body, the Church of God. In the former capacity, we are at our own election in respect of time, place, and form, according to the exigence of our private affairs, but in the latter, we are circumscribed by the churches power over us for the general good, to which special promises (Mat. xviii. 20) are annexed. Though St. Paul (2 Cor. i. 11) had no reason to doubt the effect of his single prayers, yet he thought the *united* devotions of the whole assembly would prevail better for him. When the whole city of Nineveh (Jonah iv. 11) became petitioners, it was not in God's power to deny their supplications. So says Tertullian, *We assemble in troops, and besiege Heaven with our prayers.* To which St. Ambrose adds, (Apol. i. 39) *Multi minime dum congregantur unanimus, sunt magni; et multorum preces impossibile est contemni.* Great forces cannot be resisted, because if some be weak and slack they will be encouraged and assisted by the warmth and zeal of others; for
which

which reason we may suppose it was that King David (Psal. xxvi. 12. xxxiv. 18) so solemnly promiseth, to offer *the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God in the great congregation*, and so earnestly and affectionately excites others to do the like. To which may not be improperly added, his bitter lamentations (Psal. xxx. 4. xcvi. 5) when in exile; for though he might want many other things agreeable to his royal dignity, yet, as if they were totally insignificant, he lays the whole weight of his grief upon being debarred the benefit of *public assemblies*, and free access to the House of God.

The reason why good men are so in love with public devotions, and the solemnity of *common prayer*, is, because they find themselves more powerfully assisted in heart and soul by those means, to perform more *reasonable and acceptable service to God*, than if they were left to themselves. In men's private devotions, secrecy is chiefly commanded, lest we should seek the praises of men; but what they are to perform in public, must be so carefully done, that they may obtain the approbation of God, and be exemplary to others.

HOOKE'S ECC. POLITY, Book V.

THIS holy service offered up to God by the priest, in the name of the Church, is far more acceptable to Almighty God, than the devotions of any private man. For, first, it is the service of the whole Church, which every man, that holds
com-

communion with that Church, hath consented to, and said Amen, and agreed that it should be offered up to God by the priest in the name of the Church: and, if *what any two of you shall agree to ask upon earth, it shall be granted* (Mat. xviii. 9) how much more, what is asked of God, or offered up to God by the common vote, and joint desire of the whole body of the Church?

Besides, this public service and worship of God is commanded by God, to be offered up to him in the behalf of the Church; and therefore must needs be most acceptable to him, which is so appointed by him; for what he commands, he accepts most certainly. Private devotions and services of particular men, which are offered by themselves, for themselves, are sometimes accepted, sometimes refused by God, according as the persons are affected to vice or virtue; but this public worship is like that lamb, (Exod. xxix) commanded to be offered by the priest for others, (for the Church) and therefore accepted, whatsoever the priest be that offers it up. And therefore King David prays, (Psal. cxli. 2) *Let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice*; i. e. as surely accepted as that evening sacrifice of the lamb, which no indevotion or sin of the priest could hinder, but that it was most certainly accepted for the Church, because commanded to be offered for the Church (St. Chrys. Hom in Psal. cxl.)

This public service is accepted of God, not only for those that are present, and say Amen to it, but for all those that are absent upon just cause, even for all that do not renounce communion with it and the Church; for it is the common service of them all, commanded to be offered up in the
names

Names of them all, and agreed to by all of them to be offered up for them all, and therefore is accepted for them all, though presented to God by the priest alone; as the lamb offered up to God by the priest, (Exod. 29) was the sacrifice of the whole congregation of the children of Israel; *a sweet-smelling savour, a savour of rest*, to pacify God Almighty daily, and to continue his favor to them, and make Him dwell with them. (Exod. xxix. 42, 45)

BP. SPARROW'S RATIONALE ON THE
COMMON PRAYER.

THO' I have not hitherto mentioned it, there ought to be also a public worship of the Deity. For a man may be considered as a member of a *society*, and *as such* he ought to worship God (if he has the opportunity of doing it: if there are proper prayers used publicly, which he may resort to; and his health, &c. permit). Or the *society* may be considered as *one body*, that has common interests and concerns, and *as such* is obliged to worship the Deity, and offer one common prayer. Beside, there are many, who know not of themselves, *how* to pray; perhaps cannot so much as read. These too must be taken *as they are*, and consequently some time and place *appointed*, where they may have suitable prayers read to them, and be guided in their devotions. And further, toward the keeping mankind in order, it is *necessary* there should be some religion professed, and even established; which cannot be without some *public*

public worship. And were it not for that sense of virtue, which is principally preserved (so far as it is preserved) by national forms and habits of religion, men would soon loose it all, run wild, prey upon one another, and do what else the worst of savages do.

WOOLASTON'S RELIGION OF NATURE
DELINEATED.

THOSE prayers are most acceptable to God, and most necessary for us, which are offered in *public assemblies*; because they have these advantages above private devotions, that God is most honoured and glorified by such addresses: and a sense of his majesty is maintained in the world, somewhat suitable to his most excellent greatness and goodness, when by outward signs and tokens we publish and declare the inward regard and esteem we have for his divine attributes: because private prayer is only piety confined within our own breasts; but public prayer is piety exemplified and displayed in our outward actions: it is the beauty of holiness made visible; our light shines out before men, and in the eye of the world; it enlarges the interests of godliness, and keeps up a face and sense of religion among mankind. Our Saviour promises his special presence to such assemblies, and hath appointed a particular order of men to offer up our prayers in such places of worship. Besides, we may expect greater success, when our petitions are made with the joint and unanimous consent of our fellow christians, and when our

devotions receive warmth and heat from the exemplary zeal of pious ministers. Whoever thinks justly must be sensible, that private religion never did in fact subsist, but where some public profession of it was regularly kept up: *he must be sensible, that, if public worship were once discontinued, an universal forgetfulness of that God would ensue, whom to remember is the strongest sense and preservative against vice; and that the bulk of mankind would soon degenerate into mere savages and barbarians, if there were not stated days to call them off from the common business of life, to attend to what is the most important business of all, their salvation in the next.—In a word, public worship is the great instrument of securing a sense of God's providence and of a world to come, and a sense of God's providence and a world to come, is the great basis of all social and private duties.*

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

To the successful progress of our Christian warfare, it is also necessary that we should live in the frequent use of the *public ordinances and institutions* of our religion; namely, in the religious observation of the Lord's day, and in frequent communion with one another in the holy sacrament, both which are of great use to us in the course and progress of our spiritual warfare. *For as for the Lord's day, it is instituted, and ever since the Apostles time hath been observed in the Christian Church, as a day of public worship and weekly thanksgiving for our Saviour's resurrection, in*
which

which the great work of our redemption was consummated. And certainly it must needs be of vast advantage to be one day in seven sequestered from the world, and employed in divine offices, in solemn prayers, praises, and thanksgivings, and to be obliged to assist and edify one another by the *mutual example and union of our devotions*; to have the duties of our religion explained, the sins against it reprehended, and the doctrines of it unfolded and reduced to plain and easy principles of practice.

SCOTT'S CHRISTIAN LIFE, vol. 1. part 1. ch. 4.

As you ought to take care about the worship of God in your closets and in your families; let me add, that it equally concerns you to frequent the more public worship of God in his own house. It is a bad sign of some very ill principle or other, for any man to be much a stranger there. Even to have the liberty and opportunity of worshipping God in public, is one of the greatest blessings and privileges that we can have in this world; and hath by good men always been so accounted. Now sure, if we have this notion of it, we shall think ourselves mightily concerned to take all opportunities that come in our way, not only on Sundays, but on other days, of resorting to the public assemblies, and joining with them in the solemn sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving; and thinking it a good day to us, wherein we have thus employed ourselves.

The

The sacrifices of this kind that we offer to God with an honest and devout mind, we cannot doubt, will always find acceptance, and produce their effects; nay, perhaps when our closet-prayers will not: *for there are certainly more promises to public prayers than to private ones*; though yet both are very good, nay both are absolutely necessary.

ARCHBISHOP SHARP'S SERMONS, Sermon IX.

If religion were taken away, human life would be thrown into confusion, and the bonds of society weakened, if not quite dissolved. And how is religion to be maintained and cherished? By what means can a sense of God, and Providence be more effectually propagated, and diffused among the generality of the people, than by their meeting together at *stated times*, and *joining in solemn acts of worship*? Our *public assemblies, our temples, our ministers*, though sometimes represented as useless burdens to the state, *contribute more than any thing to keep piety alive in the world, and to spread the knowledge both of natural and revealed religion*. Since then society could not well subsist without religion, nor a general sense of religion be maintained without the public worship of God, it is evidently the part of every good citizen to encourage it as much as possible, by his influence and example.

THE PROTESTANT SYSTEM, Vol. II. Disc. 8.

PRIVATE

PRIVATE devotion, though it be necessary and acceptable with God, ought not to exclude or interfere with the frequency of his public worship. We are bound to be secret in our good works for fear of hypocrisy and vain glory; but yet sometimes the glory of God, and the benefit of our brethren require, that our service and obedience appear *in public*. Our Saviour does therefore exhort and command us *to let our light shine before men, to appear good, as well as to be so*; and as it is a certain sign of hypocrisy, to affect to be seen in those duties which should be private, so, on the other hand, 'tis downright atheism and irreligion, not to give, on proper occasions, some *public* testimonies of our faith and obedience. If the duties of the closet would excuse those of the church, what need had Peter and John to go up together *into the temple at the hour of prayer*? without doubt they went not thither for business or curiosity, but to join in the service and devotions of the public assembly.

NOURSE'S PRACTICAL DISCOURSES, Disc. VIII.

If the worship of God be a duty of religion, public worship is a necessary institution; *forasmuch as, without it, the greater part of mankind would exercise no religious worship at all.*

These assemblies afford also, at the same time, opportunities for moral and religious instruction, to those who otherwise would receive none. In all Protestant, and in most Christian countries, the elements of natural religion, and the important parts

parts of the evangelic history, are familiar to the lowest of the people. This competent degree and general diffusion of religious knowledge amongst all orders of Christians, which will appear a great thing when compared with the intellectual condition of barbarous nations, can fairly, I think, be ascribed to no other cause, than the regular establishment of assemblies for divine worship; in which, either portions of scripture are recited and explained, or the principles of Christian erudition are so constantly taught in sermons, incorporated with liturgies, or expressed in extempore prayer, as to imprint, by the very repetition, some knowledge and memory of these subjects upon the most unqualified and careless hearer.—

Beside the direct necessity of public worship to the greater part of every Christian community, there are other valuable advantages growing out of the use of religious assemblies, without being designed in the institution, or thought of by the individuals who compose them.

1. Joining in prayer and praises to their common Creator and Governor, has a sensible tendency to unite mankind together, and to cherish and enlarge the generous affections.—So many pathetic reflections are awakened by every exercise of social devotion, that most men, I believe, carry away from public worship a better temper towards the rest of mankind, than they brought with them. Sprung from the same extraction, preparing together for the period of all worldly distinctions, reminded of their mutual infirmities and common dependency, imploring and receiving support and supplies from the same great source of power and bounty, having all one interest to secure, one Lord to serve, one judg-

judgment, the supreme object to all of their hopes and fears, to look towards; it is hardly possible, in this position, to behold mankind as strangers, competitors, or enemies; or not to regard them as children of the same family assembled before their common parent, and with some portion of the tenderness which belongs to the most endearing of our domestic relations. It is not to be expected, that any single effect of this kind should be considerable or lasting; but the frequent return of such sentiments as the presence of a devout congregation naturally suggests, will gradually melt down the ruggedness of many unkind passions, and may generate in time a permanent and productive benevolence.

2. Assemblies for the purpose of divine worship, placing men under impressions by which they are taught to consider their relation to the Deity, and to contemplate those around them with a view to that relation, force upon their thoughts the natural equality of the human species, and thereby promote humility and condescension in the highest orders of the community, and inspire the lowest with a sense of their rights. The distinctions of civil life are almost always insisted upon too much, and urged too far. Whatever therefore conduces to restore the level, by qualifying the dispositions which grow out of great elevation or depression of rank, improves the character on both sides.—If ever the poor man holds up his head, it is at church: if ever the rich man views him with respect, it is there: and both will be the better, and the public profited, the oftener they meet in a situation, in which the consciousness of dignity in the
one

One is tempered and mitigated, and the spirit of the other erected and confirmed —

The public worship of Christians is a duty of *divine* appointment. *Where two or three, says Christ, are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,* (Matt. xviii. 20). This invitation will want nothing of the force of a command with those, who respect the person and authority from which it proceeds. Again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, x. 25, *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;* which reproof seems as applicable to the desertion of our public worship at this day, as to the forsaking the religious assemblies of Christians in the age of the Apostle. Independently of these passages of Scripture, a disciple of Christianity will hardly think himself at liberty to dispute a practice set on foot by the inspired preachers of his religion, coeval with its institution, and retained by every sect into which it has been since divided.

PALEY'S PRINCIPLES OF MORAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, Vol. II. Ch. 4.

RELIGION is evidently ordained for the sake of God in the first place, and they who imagine that it is enough to practice those duties only that relate to men are grossly deceiving themselves.

Now this principle will immediately lead us to the public worship of God, because it tends more in the very nature of the thing to promote the honour and glory of God, than private worship can possibly do, being performed with greater solemnity,

nity, and in the presence of many witnesses. — When a whole congregation unite with one heart and voice, to confess their sins in presence of each other, and humbly to beg God's pardon upon their knees, and praise his adorable excellencies, and by so doing, reciprocally raise and enflame their affections and devotions, there is a peculiar force, solemnity, and beauty in such worship, that is not to be found in that which is private and secret. This is worshipping God *in the beauty of holiness, and giving him the glory due unto his name.* This is that *praise that is comely.*

If any one should demand *authorities* for public worship, I shall refer him to the Psalms of David, where they are found in plenty, and to the practice of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, and the Christians of that time, who often assembled to worship God*.

How light soever some men may make of the solemn observation of public worship on the Lord's day, yet the institution of it was wise, and the good effects are justified from experience. The last confessions of those who die by the hands of public justice bear witness to this: for they frequently deplore the violation of the Lord's day, as one principal occasion of their profligate lives, and untimely

From the very beginning of time God blessed and I blessed the seventh day to the purposes of
 * As I hinted at first setting out, I do not profess to engage in the argument of *authorities* for public worship — the example of our Saviour and his Apostles may or may not be pleaded in favor of social prayer; still however I cannot but suspect, that the very same texts of Scripture which have been brought by Mr. Wakefield in support of his opinion respecting the *solitary* devotions of the holy Nazarene, may, with an almost equal degree of conclusiveness, be referred to by those who espouse the opposite side of the question.

ends. I shall leave with all such, that tremendous denunciation of our blessed Saviour, *Woe to him through whom offences come, i. e. who is the instrument of creating prejudices against religion; it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea.*

HORT'S SERMONS ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS,
Serm. LX.

It is evident, both from reason and scripture, that public worship is a most useful and indispensable duty. It is equally evident, that if this duty is to be performed, some fixed and stated time for performing it is absolutely necessary: for without this it is impossible that any number of persons can ever be collected together in one place. Now one day in seven seems to be as proper and convenient a portion of our time to be allotted to this use, as any other that can be named. The returns of it are frequent enough to keep alive the sense of religion in our hearts, and distant enough to leave a very sufficient interval for our worldly concerns."——

From the very beginning of time God blessed and sanctified the seventh day to the purposes of religion (Gen. ii. 3). After our Lord's resurrection, the first day of the week was, in memory of that great event, substituted in the room of the seventh; and from that time to the present, that is, for almost eighteen hundred years, it has been constantly set apart for the public worship of God by the whole Christian world. By these means

means it comes to pass, that on this day many millions of people, in almost every region of the earth, are at one and the same time engaged in prostrating themselves before the throne of grace, and offering up their sacrifice of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving to the common Lord of all, *in whom they live, and move, and have their being.*

There is in this view of the Lord's day something so wonderfully awful and magnificent, that one would think it almost impossible for any man to resist the inclination he must find in himself to join in this general assembly of the human race, *to go with the multitude, as the Psalmist expresses it, into the house of God, and to take a part in a solemnity so striking to the imagination, so suitable to the Majesty of Heaven, so adapted to the wants, the necessities, the infirmities, the obligations, and the duties of a created and a dependent being.*

BP. PORTEUS'S SERMONS, Serm. IX.

Whether, after duly reflecting upon these concurring sentiments of men equally eminent for their virtue and abilities, we can agree with Mr. Wakefield in his condemnation of public worship, and be content to "have no more fellowship with these dangerous and unfruitful practices," I leave to the consideration of all good and serious Christians to determine.

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Br. FORTY-SIXTH SERMON, SERMON 12.

Whether, after duly reflecting upon these con-
curring arguments of men equally sincere for their
virtue and abilities, we can agree with Mr. Wake-
field in his condemnation of public worship, and
be content to "have no more fellowship with
"dangerous and unchristian practices," I leave to
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THE END

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